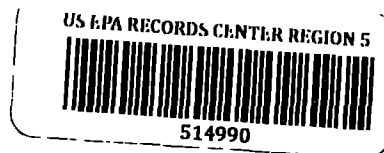


REILLY TAR & CHEMICAL CORPORATION

10514

TO: MR. R. J. BOYLE - INDIANAPOLIS
FROM: H. L. Finch
SUBJECT: PITCH TANK EXPLOSION

OFFICE: St. Louis Park
DATE: April 17, 1963



For your files, we wish to report that an explosion occurred in our No. 19 pitch blend tank located just west of the refinery. The explosion occurred about 12:00 Noon, on Monday, April 15, while we were in the process of drumming pitch for a Canadian order specifying a melting point of 132 to 147°C. According to eye witness report, the flames shot from the top of the tank, coming out of the vent stack that vents both No. 18 and No. 19 tanks. Hardly any fire was visible after the initial explosion but the area became immediately enveloped with yellow pitch fumes as the temperature of the pitch was approximately 340°C during the process of drumming.

The Fire Department was summoned immediately after the explosion and they arrived within about ten minutes after the call. They began at once to pour water on the adjoining tanks, on the building and on the pitch coming from the center tank. The water did a fairly good job of setting up the pitch and cooling it off rapidly, and within a half hour the situation was under control. No one was injured during the mishap but the two men drumming the pitch were visibly shaken.

The explosion bulged the bottom of the tank, lifted the tank about six to seven inches off the foundation and bulged the top of the tank. The flush bottom valve to the pitch line going to our cooling bay was pulled from the bottom of the tank and it is at this point that the pitch came out of the tank. The pitch line, of course, is insulated and we have the induction type of heating on the outside of the insulation and this line around the tank became completely covered with hot pitch. We have not tried to use the induction heating system since the accident as we want to clean off the pitch to see if there was any damage to the insulation on the electrical wires. The pitch has covered quite an area around the three vertical tanks and also ran down into the refinery building around the base of the pitch pump and into the trenches just inside the refinery building. Quite a quantity of pitch ran into the trenches on the outside of the refinery and, needless to say, there is quite a mess to be cleaned up.

We have asked Bros Boiler, Minneapolis Tank and Moorhead Boiler to come out and give us a quotation to put this tank in a useable condition. Mr. Al Ewing of the General Adjustment Bureau visited with us today, April 17, and looked over the damaged area to make his report. We explained to Mr. Ewing that it was our opinion that we would have to replace both the top and the bottom of this tank and repair damaged insulation. We talked with Mr. Hennessy relating to the possible damage to the tank. Mr. Hennessy explained that similar

INTER-OFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

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repairs were made at Granite City and he would guess that the repairs would be somewhere between \$3500 and \$4000. I think Mr. Ewing is estimating the damage at between \$5000 and \$6000. It was explained to Mr. Ewing, however, that we would know much more about the cost of the damage once we had estimates from the concerns mentioned.

Yours very truly,


H. L. Finch

HLF/ep

cc : Dr. F. J. Mootz

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